DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 878 HE 025 641

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TITLE Differences among Student Groups on Criteria of an Ideal Student.
PUB DATE 17 Apr 92
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Psychological Association (Austin, TX, April 17, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *College Students; Grade Point Average; Higher Education; *Individual Characteristics; Sex Differences; *Student Attitudes; Student Development

ABSTRACT

A study was done of college students' perceptions of the characteristics of the ideal student and the study's findings were compared with earlier research. In particular the study examined differences between student groups of gender, college status and grade point average (GPA). The study surveyed 313 students in psychology and special education classes of whom 95 were male and 217 female (one subject did not report gender). The survey instrument was a questionnaire of proven reliability that used a Likert-type scale to rate characteristics. Findings of the study indicated that there were a number of agreements as to the most and least important criteria of an ideal student among students in different parts of the country over the past 25 years. Students perceive the ideal student as having goals for being in college, thinking and appraising their goals, and coming to classes prepared rather than focusing on social activities and seeking assistance. In addition, significant differences were found for the participation in social life criterion among college status groups: sophomores and juniors rated participation higher than the graduates. Among GPA groups, there was a significant difference on the criterion of an ideal student thinking independently: the highest GPA group rated independent thinking higher than the other two groups. Included are seven tables and six references. (JB)

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DIFFERENCES AMONG STUDENT GROUPS ON CRITERIA OF AN IDEAL STUDENT

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Presented at

Southwestern Psychological Association Convention

Held at

Austin, Texas

April 17, 1992

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated which characteristics of an ideal student were the most and least important (as perceived by students) and compared the findings with those previously reported. There were 313 students who participated in the study. Differences were also investigated between student groups (gender, college status, and GPA) on the characteristics of an ideal student. Findings might be most valuable to students in assisting them to evaluate themselves and in developing these characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

Students at colleges and universities often perceive their successes and/or failures (in the courses they enroll) as mainly due to the professors who teach the courses. Research on students evaluation of professors is well documented; whereas, students evaluation of students is not. Various attempts have been made to bridge the gap of understanding between students and their instructors. One such attempt was made when questionnaires were developed with students' view of an ideal professor (Gadzella, 1966) and students' views of an ideal student (Gadzella, 1966).

The focus of the present study was students' views of an ideal student. Specifically, the purposes were to: (a) investigate students' current views of the most and the least

important characteristics of an ideal student and compare the findings with those previously reported and (b) determine if there were significant differences among student groups (gender, college status, and grade-point averages, GPA) on characteristics of an ideal student.

METHOD

There were 313 students, enrolled in psychology and special education classes at a state university, who participated in this study. In this group, there were 95 men and 217 women (one subject did not report the gender). Of the group, 68 were freshmen, 68 were sophomores, 99 were juniors, 46 were seniors, and 32 were graduates. Subjects reported their GPA's and were included in one of the four GPA groups: 1.80 - 2.50 (n = 67); 2.51 - 3.00 (n = 102); 3.01 - 3.50 (n = 66); and 3.51 - 4.00 (n = 59).

The instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire entitled Students' Views of An Ideal Student (Gadzella, 1966). The reliability of the instrument has been previously determined (Gadzella, Ginther, & Fullwood, 1991). The questionnaire consists of 26 characteristics of an ideal student suggested by students. All the characteristics are stated positively. Students in the present study rated each of the characteristics on a 5-point Likert scale, in which 5 = very important, 4 = important, 3 = average importance, 2 = below average importance, and 1 = least important. The date were entered into the computer. Means, standard deviations, analyses of variance, and

Newman-Keuls post-*t* tests were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Table A lists the characteristics of an ideal student and the means for each characteristic for the total group studied. The five most important (highest means) and five least important (lowest means) criteria of an ideal student for the total group and for men and women are summarized in Table 1. There is agreement among men and women as to the most important criteria of an ideal student. These criteria were that an ideal student: has objectives and reasons for being in college, is willing to try even when topics are difficult, comes to class prepared, attends classes, and thinks independently about topics discussed. The least important criteria of an ideal student (selected by students) were: participating in community activities, participating in social activities on campus, is being well-groomed and appropriately dressed, using guidance and counseling services, and seeking assistance from experienced students. In Table 2 the most and least important criteria of an ideal student are compared with two other student groups who had previously responded to the questionnaire. The results are similar to those indicated in Table 1.

An analysis of variance was used to determine if there were significant differences on the criteria of an ideal student for men and women (Table 3). Women's overall rating of an ideal student was significantly higher than the men's ratings. Of the 26 criteria of an ideal student, women rated 11 criteria higher

than the men. These criteria were that an ideal student: has objectives and future goals, thinks, has study schedules, is mature, is prepared for classes, is punctual, attends classes, is courteous, is appreciative, respects other students, and helps other students. Significant F-ratios were found for one criterion (participation in social life) among college status groups. It is presented in Table 4. On social life and extra curricular activities, Newman-Keuls post-t tests showed that sophomores and juniors rated it higher than the graduates, respectively. Among GPA groups (Table 5), there was a significant difference among the groups on the criterion of an ideal student thinking independently. Post-t tests showed the differences were between GPA groups 1.80 - 2.50 and 3.51 - 4.00 and between GPA groups 2.51 - 3.00 and 3.51 - 4.00. In each case, the highest GPA group (3.51 - 4.00) rated the criterion higher than the other two groups.

DISCUSSION

The findings in the present study indicate that, generally, there were a number of agreements as to the most and least important criteria of an ideal student among students in different parts of the country over the past 25 years. Students perceive the ideal student as having goals for being in college, thinking and appraising their goals, and coming to classes prepared rather than focusing on social activities and seeking assistance. If students would use these criteria to evaluate themselves as to whether they have the characteristics that make

a good student, they might be in a better position to develop these characteristics. It would also assist to bridge the gap of understanding between students and their instructors. That is, an understanding that learning and teaching are both active roles in which the students and instructors must be involved.

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TABLE A

Number and Description of Characteristics of An Ideal Student and Means For Total Group (n = 312)

Number	Characteristic	M
1	- Has objectives and reasons for being in college	4.38
2	- Examines the course content as to value to self	3.73
3	- Gets to know instructors and what is expected	3.82
4	- Thinks independently about topics discussed	4.27
5	- Is willing to try even when topics are difficult	4.31
6	- Strives for high goals, does extra readings	3.75
7	- Participates in class discussions	3.71
8	- Has and uses good communication skills	4.01
9	- Has good study schedules	4.12
10	- Uses different study methods effectively	3.85
11	- Is of aware and uses different resources	3.72
12	- Uses guidance and counseling opportunities	3.11
13	- Seeks assistance from experienced students	3.47
14	- Does a periodic self-evaluation	3.88
15	- Is mature	3.88
16	- Maintains good health	3.79
17	- Comes to class prepared	4.38
18	- Is punctual for classes and appointments	4.11
19	- Attends classes	4.29
20	- Is courteous to instructors	3.91
21	- Is appreciative of instructors' assistance	3.92
22	- Respects other students	3.82
23	- Helps other students	3.52
24	- Participates in community activities	3.03
25	- Participates in social activities on campus	3.03
26	- Is well-groomed and appropriately dressed	3.07

TABLE 1

Comparison of the Five Most Important and Five Least Important Characteristics of An Ideal Student For the Total and Men and Women

Importance	Characteristic Number		
	Total	Men	Women
Most Important	1 and 17	5	1
2nd Most Important	5	17	17
3rd Most Important	19	1	19
4th Most Important	4	4	5
5th Most Imortant	9	19	4
Least Important	24 and 25	25	24 and 25
2nd Least Importsnt	26	24	26
3rd Least Important	12	26	12
4th Least Important	13	12	13
5th Least Important	23	13	23

TABLE 2

Comparison of the Five Most and Five Least Important Characteristics of An Ideal Student For Students on ETSU, WSC-O, and WWSC Campuses

Importance	Characteristic Number		
	ETSU	WSU-O	WWSC
Most Important	1 and 17	1	4
2nd Most Important	5	4	1
3rd Most Important	19	6	6
4th Most Important	4	5	17
5th Most Important	9	17	14
Least Important	24 and 25	26	26
2nd Least Important	26	24	24
3rd Least Important	12	13	25
4th Least Important	13	25	13
5th Least Important	23	12	12

ESTU - East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas (1991)

WSU-O - Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh, Wisconsin (1968)

WWSC - Western Washington State College, Bellingham, Washington, (1966).

TABLE 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and F -ratios For Eleven Characteristics and Total of An Ideal Student for Men (n = 95) and Women (n = 217), df = 1/310

Characteristic	Group	M	SD	F-ratio	p
Has objectives, future goals	Men	4.20	0.89	7.09	.0078*
	Women	4.45	0.71		
Thinks	Men	4.12	0.98	4.39	.0361*
	Women	4.34	0.82		
Has study schedules	Men	3.91	1.16	6.88	.0087*
	Women	4.21	0.82		
Is mature	Men	3.69	1.17	4.41	.0356*
	Women	3.95	0.92		
Is prepared for classes	Men	4.23	0.96	4.29	.0384*
	Women	4.44	0.76		
Is punctual	Men	3.89	1.06	8.16	.0043*
	Women	4.20	0.78		
Attends classes	Men	4.05	0.98	10.15	.0014*
	Women	4.40	0.84		
Is courteous	Men	3.73	1.11	5.22	.0223*
	Women	4.00	0.88		
Is appreciative	Men	3.75	1.04	4.82	.0282*
	Women	3.99	0.83		

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Means, Standard Deviations, and F-ratios For Eleven Characteristics and Total of the Ideal Student For Men (n = 95) and Women (n = 217), df = 1/310

Characteristic	Group	M	SD	F-ratio	p
Respects other students	Men	3.61	1.02	7.37	.0066*
	Women	3.92	0.87		
Helps other students	Men	3.29	0.94	8.17	.0043*
	Women	3.62	0.93		
Total score	Men	95.25	15.11	4.66	.0309
	Women	99.21	14.82		

*$p < .05$

TABLE 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and F-ratios For One Characteristic of An Ideal Student For Freshmen (n = 69), Sophmores (n = 68), Juniors (n = 99) Seniors (n = 46), and Graduates (n = 32), df = 4/308

Characteristic	Group	M	SD	F-ratio	p
Participates in social life	Freshman	2.93	1.11	2.88	.0229*
	Sophmore	3.32	1.11		
	Junior	3.13	1.16		
	Senior	2.89	1.16		
	Graduate	2.59	1.01		

*$p < .05$

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, and F-ratios For One Characteristic of An Ideal Student For Group GPA: 1.80 -2.50 (n = 67_, 2.51 - 3.00 (n = 102), 3.01 - 3.50 (n = 66), and 3.51 - 4.00 (n = 59), df = 3/290

Characteristic	Group	M	SD	F-ratio	p
Thinks independently	1.80-2.50	4.16	0.90	3.34	.0197*
	2.51-3.00	4.13	1.02		
	3.01-3.50	4.42	0.68		
	3.51-4.00	4.50	0.77		

*p = < .05